Stay With Me

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Summary

Sinclair and Ryōshū nearly walk past an alley when he hears quiet tick-tocks, familiar tick-tocks. “Ryōshū.” He tugs on her sleeve and motions with his head. The woman looks and moves first, Sinclair behind her. What he sees in the alley horrifies him. A group of men around another man and Dante. The men laugh as one of them does horrific things to the manager. He can't look but he can't look away .

Notes

This was technically supposed to be finished earlier BUT I kept adding on lol I'm surprised it's as long as it is

See the end of the work for more notes

Sinclair and Ryōshū nearly walk past an alley when he hears quiet tick-tocks, familiar tick-tocks. “Ryōshū.” He tugs on her sleeve and motions with his head. The woman looks and moves first, Sinclair behind her. What he sees in the alley horrifies him. A group of men around another man and Dante. The men laugh as one of them does horrific things to the manager. He can't look but he can't look *away* .

Ryōshū is the first to move, grabbing the man who is in contact with Dante and throwing him to the ground. “I.D.W.T.P.C.V.” Sinclair watches as Dante nearly falls to the ground before Ryōshū catches them, laying them down. Sinclair frantically looks in his pockets for his phone, finally pulling it out. He dials Vergilius' number, given to all sinners in case of an emergency and waits for him to pick up.

“ *Sinclair. This better* ***be*** *an emergency…* ” The man's voice sounds tired, even through a phone. Sinclair's eyes follow Ryōshū's movements as she fights the men in the alley. “I-It is!” Sinclair hears Ryōshū grunt. His eyes trail off to Dante's unmoving body. He knows they're alive, their chest is moving up and down but the fire on their head is nearly gone, most of it a smoke and their tick-tocks now barely audible. “All of us were out in the market and we lost Dante-” Before Sinclair can continue he's interrupted by Vergilius' voice.

“ *You lost the Manager?* ” Vergilius' voice was bubbling with anger. Sinclair can hear Ryōshū scoff. “T.H.T.C.H.” Sinclair's eyes now follow Ryōshū's movements. “I'm trying!” He yells to the woman. Ryōshū shoots Sinclair a glare making him squirm. Sinclair notices one of the men move towards Dante. Sinclair puts the phone on speaker and shoves it into his pants pocket so Vergilius can still hear him.

He moves his halberd to cut off the man's access to Dante. “Not the point! Ryōshū and I found them. We're fighting some men but we probably need your help!” He clashes with the man's weapon. He hears a sigh from Vergilius. “ *At the very least are they uninjured?* ” Sinclair frowns as he clashes with the man again. He didn't see any injuries but that didn't mean Dante didn't have any. “I-I don't know! I didn't see any!” Sinclair hesitates for a moment. He barely hears movement from Vergilius' side as weapons clash.

“All I know I saw that they did things to Dante.” He finally says. Sinclair’s attention turns again to Dante as he sees out of the corner of his eye more men dressed similarly to the group he and Ryōshū were fighting. He knew he wouldn't hold on for much longer, the man he was clashing with was wearing Sinclair down but he couldn't let

himself do that, to make Ryōshū protect him and Dante.

“Please just come here! I don't know how much longer I can hold on and I can't make Ryōshū protect me and Dante!” Sinclair pleaded, tears falling from his eyes. He wanted nothing more other than to rest now, the moment everyone realized Dante was missing the Sinners divided into groups to look for the manager.

“ *I'll be there.* ” That was all Vergilius said before he hung up. Sinclair swung his halberd at the man hard but the man clashed with his own weapon even harder and Sinclair's halberd fell out of his hands. That was it. Next time everyone was out Sinclair was going to stick very closely to Dante, *if* there was going to be a next time. He doubted it but he hoped Dante didn't sustain *any* injuries.

Just as he saw the man swing his weapon Sinclair heard a very familiar voice. “**Duck.**” And so Sinclair ducked. Immediately he heard the clashing of weapons and cries of pain. A moment later, silence. A pat on Sinclair's shoulder. “Kid.” He looked up. Ryōshū was very bloody, though the blood wasn't hers. He stood up. “Y.D.G.K.” Said Ryōshū patting his shoulder with a ghost of a smirk. Sinclair grimaced as he looked around seeing blood, guts and mangled corpses, Ryōshū's job.

He looked over to Dante who was still laying down but now he saw the state they were in. The state of their clothes is abysmal, nearly all of it cut up in ribbons, very few parts of their body covered up. Even worse, he noticed various marks on their body. Bites, hickeys, bruises, even a few cuts.

Sinclair ran up to Dante, kneeled next to them, took off his coat and picked them up gently, trying to not give them possibly even more pain, he put it over their shoulders, trying to bundle them up at least a little. He heard Vergilius talking to one of the men.

“Tch. Pathetic.” Ryōshū threw a cigarette butt to the ground and crushed it with her shoe. “Taking advantage of the weak.” She looked at the kneeling Sinclair who held Dante and took off her own coat and covered the manager up with it. She took out another cigarette and lit it, a puff of smoke immediately leaving her mouth. Her red eyes followed Vergilius who looked furious.

“Call the others.” Vergilius said, glaring at Ryōshū. She took out her phone and opened a group chat, she tapped on the phone, a moment later a calling signal. “ *Ryōshū? Why are you calling all of us?* ” Gregor

spoke up. “ *Have you and Sinclair found Dante? Are they okay? Are you two okay?* ” Rodion then spoke up. Ryōshū frowned. “Yes we found them. They are…” She uncharacteristically trailed off. “Alive. Yes, me and Sinclair are okay. Vergilius is with us.” She looked to the man who was crouching and looking over Dante.

“ *Wow. You didn't use any of your acronyms~* ” Hong Lu said. “Easier without asking the kid to translate to you.” Ryōshū growled. Outis’ voice spoke up. “ *And pray tell what happened for you to say the Executive Manager is "alive "?"* Her tone, accusatory. Ryōshū looked to Sinclair who was talking to Vergilius, tripping over his words and hiccuping, trying not to cry. Her eyes went to Vergilius who looked a bit relieved but also she saw a hint of rage. “Later. Now we'll go back to the bus. All of you.”

Nearly immediately everyone started arguing, Ryōshū's finger nearly hit the end call button when Vergilius spoke up. “We'll talk about all of this back on the bus. NO exceptions.” A moment of silence. “ *Verily Sir Vergilius-!* ”Don Quixote's voice was muffled. “ *Understood* .” Meursault spoke up. Then Ryōshū ended the call. She pocketed the phone and looked at Sinclair, who's eyes were red and puffy and he was shaking, probably from stress. “G.T.T.V.” Sinclair looked up at Ryōshū and hesitantly nodded, carefully passing Dante to Vergilius.

Sinclair was jogging next to Vergilius who held Dante, Ryōshū on the man's other side. Sinclair was frantically scanning his surroundings, even so he noticed the way Vergilius held Dante. He knew the manager was in good hands.

Charon knew something was wrong the moment Vergilius' phone rang. Listening to the conversation she knew something was more than wrong. Even more so when Vergilius nearly crushed his phone and left.

So when Vergilius came back to Mephistopheles she was relieved but only for a moment as she saw the man hold Dante in his arms, the clockhead bundled up in two of the Sinners' coats. Charon watched for a moment as Vergilius went into the back, out of the corner of her eye seeing Sinclair and Ryōshū board the bus. She nodded to both of them

and left after Vergilius.

When she caught up the man was standing in the corridor. “Verg?” A sigh from Vergilius. “Charon, do you think Dante should be in their room or mine?” His voice shook slightly. She didn't know what exactly happened but she knew it was bad. “Charon thinks Tick-Tock would like to be in their room.” Vergilius nodded and went towards Dante's room, Charon trailing behind him.

Charon's eyes went wide seeing the state Dante's body was in, she was right that something was wrong. Various marks that she couldn't even begin to comprehend. “Does it hurt Tick-Tock?” She asked, looking at Vergilius, her brows furrowed. The man let out a shaky breath. She reached out to touch Dante's clockhead, she didn't dare to touch any other part of their body, it felt wrong, the cold red metal biting at her fingertips.

Charon looked at Vergilius. “Charon will be back in a moment.” She waited for the man to acknowledge her so when he nodded she left the room.

Sinclair was in his seat like the rest of the Sinners, his uniform soaked in blood. His head was hung low. He didn't know what Vergilius had in store for all of them, he couldn't even begin to imagine.

The man was of course not here yet as Sinclair was sure he was tending to Dante. Not even Faust was allowed, only Charon.

“Hey, Fau? You always keep saying you know all.” Rodion started as she turned around in her seat to face Faust. “How come you didn't say anything?”

Faust looked at Rodion then her eyes uncharacteristically fell to the floor then she looked back at Rodion. “Faust didn't expect that outcome.”

Rodion opened her mouth to say more but was interrupted by the slam of the door leading into the corridor and Vergilius finally appearing.

His eyes scanned the room, nobody dared to speak or even breathe. Vergilius walked up to the front and turn around. His eyes glowed just for a moment, Sinclair squirmed.

Vergilius' red eyes landed on Sinclair. "Go get cleaned up and go to Dante's room, Charon's there." Sinclair jumped in his seat, he looked at the man, uncertain. When he looked closer there was something in Vergilius' face Sinclair couldn't quite place.

For a moment Sinclair hesitated, should he? He too was after all responsible for keeping Dante safe and like the rest of the Sinners he didn't keep an eye on them. He felt singled out by Vergilius.

Why not Rodion or Gregor? Dante liked those two better. Or Faust, she had a sort of connection to Dante. Why Sinclair?

"Kiddo." Rodion's voice snapped him out. He looked at the woman. "I don't mean to be mean but you look like shit. Just go. I'll swing by later." The woman smiled to Sinclair. He faintly smiled back to her. He got up and left into the corridor. In that moment he heard Vergilius yell at the rest of the Sinners.

When Sinclair showered and changed his clothes he walked into the corridor. He could very faintly hear Vergilius still yell at the rest of the Sinners.

He walked closer to the door, opened it and peeked inside. Sinclair saw a few of the Sinners' heads hung low, the rest looking at Vergilius.

Sinclair noticed Ryōshū next to the door, smoking a cigarette, looking at him. She raised a brow as if to ask "why are you here?". Sinclair shook his head and waved to the woman. She briefly waved back and only then Sinclair left.

Charon stayed with Dante watching over them. Right now Vergilius was talking with the Sinners. Their injuries that could be patched up were patched up. Dante had their clothes changed too or well what was left of their clothes has been changed. Any uncovered part of their skin was showing bites, dark marks or bandages for the cuts.

Charon had changed her clothes too, mostly for comfort. She watched

the very faint flame move, Dante's idle tick-tocks were very faint too.

She heard the door to Dante's room open and she turned on the bed to see who came.

“Ah, Charon, can I come in?” Sinclair asked quietly. He had changed his clothes too, probably because his were bloody. Charon nodded. She watched the quieter blonde walk in and close the door behind himself. “How are they?” He asked, standing nearby. Charon turned back and returned her gaze to Dante. “Charon doesn't know. Charon and Verg patched Tick-Tock up.”

Sinclair nodded, he rubbed his eyes. “Is Birdy okay?” Charon asked as she noticed Sinclair's motions. The young man nods slowly. “I think so..? I mean I'm not hurt so you know.” Charon nods. “Charon knows Birdy cried, it's okay. Does Birdy want to cry right now?” She asked Sinclair. The blonde looks at her for a moment. “Charon won't tell anyone.” She says to maybe convince him that it's okay. He reminds her of someone.

Sinclair shakes his head. “No… I think I cried enough today.” Charon hums. “Did Stabby cry?”

Sinclair looks at Charon for a moment then at Dante, carefully observing them. “No. I… I don't think she cries. At least not in front of people.” Charon nods. A moment of silence between the two, only quiet tick-tocks were heard.

“Vergilius is mad.” Sinclair says suddenly. Charon nods. “Charon knows. Charon knows that Verg was very worried about Tick-Tock.” It was Sinclair's turn to nod. “I know. He's still worried about them now.” Another moment of silence.

“What is Verg doing now?” Charon asks her eyes not leaving Dante. Sinclair takes his eyes off Dante and looks at Charon.

“He's still yelling at the others. I think he's mad at Faust the most…” He scratches the back of his head. Charon furrows her brows lightly then nods. “Why is he not yelling at Birdy?” She looks at Sinclair out of the corner of her eye then back at Dante. “Charon doesn't mean that Charon wants Verg to yell at Birdy.”

“Ah, no I understood.” Sinclair hesitates. “I think that maybe he wanted me to keep you company for now?” Charon hums. “Charon thinks it's because Verg saw Birdy cry and it reminded him of others…” She trails off, her eyes briefly leaving Dante, looking at

Sinclair. She looks back at them, noticing the fire on their head is a little bigger.

Charon would've gently held Dante's hand but it probably wouldn't comfort them. “Did Vergilius tell you everything?” Sinclair asked. Charon shook her head. “Charon heard Verg talk with Birdy through phone before he left.”

She pursed her lips for a moment. “While patching up Tick-Tock, Verg said that bad men did bad things to them. Maybe even worse but Tick-Tock is sleeping.” Her eyes scanned over Dante's clockhead. “Verg said it would be best not to ask Tick-Tock…” She trails off.

“Unless they are ready to talk about it, right..?” Sinclair finishes. Charon nods.

There's a knock at the door and then the door opens. “Hi. Are we interrupting anything?” Says Rodion as she walks into the room. Sinclair turns to look at the woman and sees Gregor walk inside too. Both of them were still in their uniforms.

Charon shakes her head. “Tick-Tock is sleeping. Charon and Birdy are talking quietly. Bug Guy and Gamble want to talk too?” Gregor and Rodion look at each other and Rodion closes the door. “Sure.” Both of them nod. “Both have to be quiet.” Charon warns as she fixes Dante's blankets. They nod again.

Rodion walks up to Dante's bed and looks at them. She lets out a gasp, she couldn't see *everything* but seeing even a bit of what happened was enough. She looks to Gregor who walks up and curses under his breath. “Scheiße…” He pinches the bridge of his nose with his normal hand. “I didn't know it's that bad. I thought Vergilius was exaggerating a bit.” Sinclair's shoulders sense. “It's worse than you think…”

Gregor looks at Sinclair. “*What?*”

Sinclair hiccups. “You didn't see everything… Y-You didn't see what these men were doing to them… Y-You didn't have to fight them while keeping Dante safe, waiting for Vergilius…” Tears were streaming down his face. Rodion walked up to Sinclair and hugged him. “I know, I know, Kiddo…” The blonde hugged her back, crying into her chest. “How about you go rest and we watch Dante, hm?” Sinclair nodded. He let go of Rodion. “ Sorry for crying…” He says sniffing. Rodion shakes her head. “Don't be. I'd rather see you cry than get angry and punch others, you know?” Sinclair nods.

“Do you want me to walk you to your room?” Rodion offers. Sinclair shakes his head. “No, I'll be alright… I think…” He wipes his tears with the sleeve of his shirt. “Good night everyone…”

With that Sinclair left Dante's room. Gregor stares at Dante. He moves closer and reaches out to grab the blankets. Charon immediately slaps away his hand. “Verg said to not touch Tick-Tock & not touch their blankets.” Gregor stares at the young woman. “Charon is fixing Tick-Tock's blankets not uncovering Tick-Tock.” She glares at Gregor.

Rodion grabs Gregor by the collar of his shirt and pulls him away, only then Charon's glare softens. “Scheiße, if rewinding didn't hurt Dante all of us would be dead by now…” Gregor scratches at his head.

Rodion looks at Charon. “Aren't you going to sleep too, Charon?” Charon shakes her head. “Charon is watching Tick-Tock. Is Verg still yelling at others?” Rodion hums.

“He was still yelling at them when we were leaving. Why do you ask?” Rodion tilts her head. Charon fixes Dante's blanket. “Charon knows Verg is worried about Tick-Tock but Verg has to yell at all of you because Tick-Tock got hurt.”

She sees Dante shiver badly. She hops off the bed. “Charon is going to look for fluffy blankets.” Gregor and Rodion nod. Charon looks at both of them for a moment. “No touching Tick-Tock.” Both of them nod and only then Charon leaves the room.

“Do you think we'll be able to go out after this?” Rodion asks. Gregor shakes his head. “I don't think so. Maybe without Dante but not with them. I don't think Vergilius has any trust in any of us anymore.”

Rodion sits on Dante's bed, careful not to touch them. “But we still have our job to do. You know, searching for the Golden Boughs?” She sighs, resting her head in her palm. “Really don't know what will we do… What should we do?”

“At the very least…”Gregor starts but then trails off. He pinched the bridge of his nose again. “Ah… I don't know… We should make sure Manager Bud is okay.” Rodion nods in agreement.

The door to Dante's room opens once again and Charon's back. “Charon got blankets. Gamble has to get up.” Rodion nods and gets up from the bed and moves away. She looks to the doorway and sees Vergilius. “Done yelling at everyone, Vergie?” She asks, usually it'd be

teasing but now she was checking up on him. Vergilius nods. “I'll watch Dante. You two go to sleep.” He whispers, looking at Charon putting the fluffy blankets on Dante.

“All that yelling made you loose your voice, huh?” Gregor asks. Vergilius nods, he moves inside the room. Rodion and Gregor move to the doorway. “Good night.” Says Rodion, waving to Charon. Charon waves back. And Rodion and Gregor leave the room, closing the door behind themselves.

Vergilius watches Charon fix up the blankets. “Charon hopes Tick-Tock will be alright.”

Vergilius and Charon are awoken by a series of pained and panicked tick-tocks and a sound of a fire roaring. Charon immediately runs to turn on the light, the night lamp so there isn't too much light.

Both of them see Dante throw off the blankets and thrashing on the bed. Charon's unsure what to do, she looks to Vergilius who looks even more worried than usual.

<Please, please, *please* , *please* , don't… Please just leave me alone… I don't wanna…> Dante whispers, pleading to someone, anyone to just leave them alone. Vergilius steps closer to the bed and kneels next to it. “Dante…” He calls out, quietly, nearly not audible because of Dante's erratic tick-tocks.

Charon stands next to Vergilius. “Tick-Tock.” She calls out louder as didn't lose her voice earlier. She grimaces when they don't react, so she reaches out and taps on Dante's clockhead.

The fire on Dante's head becomes even bigger and roars louder, their tick-tocks louder and more erratic. Then it all falls silent.

The fire is completely gone, the clockhead is quiet but only for a moment. The fire comes back slowly, crackling gently like usual and the idle tick-tocks usual, except… Dante's sobbing. To Charon it sounds like broken tick-tocks but Vergilius knows they're sobbing.

“Dante…”

Immediately Dante looks at Vergilius and they reach out with their arms, visibly shaking. <Vergil! Vergil! Please! I… I'm sorry!> Vergilius sits down on the bed and lets Dante pull him into an

embrace and cling onto him, sobbing. Vergilius wrapped his arms around Dante, unsure if he should do so.

Charon shifts nervously, feeling a bit like she's an intruder. “Dante…” Vergilius starts quietly. “Charon's here too.” Dante looks up and lifts one of their arms, inviting Charon. She, of course, silently agrees and hugs Dante.

The next morning Dante stays in bed. They tried sleeping more but couldn't. They thought of what happened when they got lost. Who found them? Was it Vergilius? Or the Sinners? All of them or maybe some?

Dante felt Vergilius shift next to them and hesitate for a moment. <It's alright…> They say. Vergilius wraps an arm around Dante and pulls them closer. “Go back to sleep Dante, please…”

<I can't…> Dante shook their head. Vergilius sighed. “Then let's just stay here…” His voice hoarse. Just what did happen when Dante was unconscious? Dante supposed they could worry about that later. Vergilius' grip on them tightens a little and Dante slowly falls back asleep.

When Dante wakes up they feel eyes staring at them. They feel 26 pairs of eyes on them. They look to the door and Charon and the Sinners stare, Dante stares back.

“Tick-Tock is awake?” Charon asks. Dante nods. There's a collective sigh of relief.

“Ack!” Don Quixote nearly chokes on her spit. “Manager Esquire! Thou is sleeping together with Sir Vergilius!?”

Dante wants to sit up but Vergilius' grip on them tightens. “If you don't stop yelling…”Vergilius starts, then coughs. “I'll make you do *ALL* the chores…”

Dante nearly falls back asleep when they hear footsteps. “Executive Manager, what is the plan for today?” Asks Outis, regarding them with a look they can't quite place, not yet. To be fair Dante feels awful, if they could they'd rather spend the rest of their days cuddled up next to Vergilius.

<There's no plan for today Outis… I thought I… > Dante trails off. They can't finish speaking.

“You think I'm a fool, Executive Manager? Surely you just wanted to take a break so you got lost on purpose and-” Outis' speech is stopped by a slap on her face, in front of her stands Sinclair, hand raised and brows furrowed. “You won't talk to them like that! You!-” A slap on his face has Sinclair nearly tumble to the ground.

“You! You will not behave like that to me!” Outis snaps, her hand raised. She reaches for her kopis when Ryōshū is standing in front of her, cigarette in the red eyed woman's mouth. She tilts her head and grins. “You weren't there yesterday so *YOU* know nothing.” She looks over to Sinclair then to Dante, who's sitting up along with Vergilius, the man glaring at everyone already.

There's silence for a moment then Vergilius speaks up, pinching the bridge of his nose. “I don't care *how* you resolve this *problem* , however I'd rather have it resolved without *unnecessary* bloodshed and pain for the Manager and for it to be done somewhere else.”

Outis huffs and is the first to leave. Then leaves Ryōshū, with a certain glint in her eye. Sinclair looks at Dante and Vergilius and bows his head in apology. “I'm sorry…” He says quietly and leaves. One by one each of the Sinners leave and Charon is the only one left.

She closes the door and speaks up. “No driving Mephi?” Vergilius shakes his head. “No.”

Charon nods. “Okay.” She sits on the bed and stares at the ceiling.

Dante leans against Vergilius slowly falling back asleep. “Going back to sleep, Dante?” Vergilius teases lightly. Dante nods.

“Charon can stay outside and make sure nobody is bothering Verg and Tick-Tock. Charon just wants Verg’s phone for games.” Before Dante can think of protesting, Vergilius gives Charon his phone and she's out of the room. Through the door they can hear her talk to someone.

Vergilius lays back down, pulling Dante down too. He wraps his arms around them and then nuzzles his face into their shoulder. Dante sighs and soon they fall back asleep.

Dante wakes up much later. They know that because it feels like that. They carefully wriggle out of Vergilius' arms and quietly leave the

room, letting the man sleep.

In the chair next to the room instead of Charon there sits Ishmael in her pajamas. <Ishmael?> The redhead looks up. “Oh, I was wondering when you'd wake up.” Dante tilts their head at her. <Why?> Ishmael shrugs. “I thought Outis and Ryōshū would fight but I guess they took Vergilius' words to heart.”

Dante crouches next to Ishmael. <What about Sinclair?> They ask. The redhead blows a raspberry. “He's with Rodya, Gregor, Don Quixote and Heathcliff, for some reason.” She looks over to Dante. She seems tired. “How are you feeling?” She asks. Dante stared at Ishmael. <I-I don't know? I think I'm fine?> They really didn't know. Feeling Vergilius' gentle touch was different from what happened to them then and it was so strange to like the touch of one but overly dislike, maybe even hate of another.

Ishmael hums. “If you need to talk, there's me, Rodya, Gregor, maybe Faust and Ryōshū?” She hesitates. “Definitely not Outis.” She grimaces for a moment. “Well I'm sure you can talk to most of us. Obviously not Sinclair, he's shaken up after everything but you know.” Dante nods slowly. They lean against the wall. <Do you know what happened?>

Ishmael shook her head. “No, beyond very vague details from Sinclair and Ryōshū and the yelling we got from Vergilius I don't know what actually happened. Do you want to talk about it?” She asks. Dante shakes their head. <No, no no no. I-I really don't… I…> Ishmael nods. “That's alright. But we're here if you want to talk about it.” She smiles gently.

<I don't think…> They trail off. Ishmael looks at them, patiently waiting. <I don't know if I'll like people touching me anymore…> Dante wants to sink into their bed, under the blankets, next to Vergilius and never leave. They grip the hem of their shirt.

“Okay.” Is what Ishmael says. “You didn't need people to touch you to be close to them” Dante nods. <Thank you Ishmael.> They pat the redhead on the shoulder, she smiled lightly.

Dante gets up and leaves to the front of Mephistopheles. They notice a few of the Sinners there. Don Quixote and Meursault engaging in conversation. Ryōshū seems to be drawing but no sight of Sinclair. They also notice Outis who sits in Dante's usual seat.

Someone pats their shoulder and Dante jolts away, letting out a train horn sound.

Everyone's heads turn to look at Dante, even Outis'. “Oh sorry Dante~ I didn't mean to scare you.” Hong Lu says, worry on his face as he watches Dante visibly shake.

Dante shakes their head. <Just don't touch me… Please…> They whisper and then leave into the corridor nearly immediately. They pass by the other Sinners and then stop in front of their door, Ishmael's still there.

Dante's whole body is shaking as they stand in front of the door. “Dante?” Ishmael raises from her chair, she reaches out with her hand but seeing Dante very visibly flinch she instead reaches for the doorknob and opens the door to their room.

<Thanks…> Dante whispers and they stumble into the room and slam the door behind them, their body hitting the door then slumping to the floor.

They feel incredibly awful.

They claw at the back of their clockhead, their body shaking.

“Dante…”

They look up and see Vergilius kneel in front of them. They reach out to him and he grabs them gently and picks them up. Dante holds onto Vergilius. “Do you want to go back to sleep?” He asks quietly. Dante nods.

Vergilius walks to Dante's bed, putting them down, he pulls the blankets over Dante. When he starts to walk away he feels a tug on his wrist. He looks at Dante. <Please stay Vergil…> They whisper.

And Vergilius stays with Dante. And both of them fall asleep again.

Ishmael stands in front of Outis, her arms crossed, Dante's door behind the sea of her red hair. “I can't let you in.” Ishmael says as a matter of fact.

“Just let me in! The Executive Manager’s reaction and this whole situation is ridiculous! We should be working but instead we are twiddling our thumbs!” Outis barks to the redhead. Ishmael shakes her head, a frown on her face. “Are you listening to yourself right now?” She wanted to yell at the woman but knew it would do no good so she

tried to stay composed. Outis' brow twitched. “Are you implying my hearing is bad?”

Ishmael smirked. “Maybe I am, since you apparently didn't listen to Vergilius yelling at all of us.” Outis grit her teeth. “Not all, one of our soldiers was missing.”

Ishmael let out a laugh. “I don't think you should worry about Sinclair missing out on being yelled at. Last I remember it wasn't him who was near Dante before they got lost but you. So maybe you deserve being yelled at and a more severe punishment.” Her eyes trailed over Outis' face. The woman looked to be fuming. “You-!”

“Besides it was him and Ryōshū who found Dante. There was no way for you to find them since the area you and Hong Lu were looking around for them was not even close.” Ishmael smirked but as soon as it appeared on her face it vanished. “Look, I really don't wanna fight with you. Not in front of Dante's room so just drop that for now, okay?” She sighed.

Outis huffed and walked away. Ishmael sank back into the chair.

“The hag's giving you trouble? I can bash her head for you if you want.” Ishmael looks at Heathcliff and shakes her head. “No. Dante doesn't need to rewind any of us.”

She watches as Heathcliff leans against a wall. “I don't understand her point of view, y'know. All of us see Dante's not doing great, yet she insists on her bloody stupid attitude.” Heathcliff crosses his arms.

Ishmael sighs. “I don't really know what to think of this whole situation. I mean it wouldn't have happened if we kept a closer eye on Dante but…” She trailed off.

Heathcliff scoffed. “Y'know all of you keep thinking how we should've watched them closer but that doesn't change anything. The thing still happened, we can't change that of course. Now we can keep an eye on Dante and help when they need it.”

Ishmael raised a brow. “When did you get so soft?” Heathcliff frowned. “Oi! I just care about them as much as you do!” He sighed. “All of you makin’ me bloody soft…” He muttered.

Ryōshū watches Outis knock on Dante's door. She looks to Sinclair who holds a few books, she points at those. “For Clockhead?”

Sinclair looks up at Ryōshū and nods quietly. She pats him on the back briefly.

The door opens and Vergilius peeks into the corridor. He raises a brow at Outis. “Miss Outis, I believe you were to leave the Manager alone.” He says with an indifferent look. Outis scowls.

Vergilius’ eyes trail to Ryōshū and Sinclair.

“I got some books for Dante, if they want to read.” Sinclair said, showing Vergilius the small pile of books. Ryōshū nods.

Vergilius narrows his eyes for a moment, looks inside Dante's room then back into the corridor. “Both of you can enter.” He says to Ryōshū and Sinclair. “No smoking.” Vergilius adds specifically to Ryōshū. The woman clicks her tounge.

Vergilius opens the door further to let Sinclair and Ryōshū in. As she passes Outis she grins at the woman, who's fuming.

When she enters the room she looks around. She hears Vergilius close the door and sees him sit down at the desk.

Dante's room is similar to their office, Ryōshū notes. There aren't as many knickknacks as in the office but she notices a few curious items, plushies strewn around the room.

She recalled the few times there were detours, mostly at Charon's request and Don Quixote kept getting prizes from claw machines. The blonde always kept gifting those to Dante. There were a few of those on the bed.

She decides it doesn't matter either way and looks at Dante who's sitting in their bed, hugging one of the plushies. She hasn't seen them much recently but they definitely look a little better.

Dante looks to Sinclair and Ryōshū, they seemed relieved to see the two Sinners.

<Sinclair?> Dante calls out quietly. The blonde looks at Dante as he puts the books down on the desk. Dante motions with their hand, Sinclair walks over to them.

Ryōshū watches Dante type something on their PDA and show it to Sinclair. The blonde turns to Vergilius. “Um… Dante asked you to get into the bed…” Sinclair said hesitantly.

Ryoshu chuckled, her eyes snapping to Vergilius. She was very aware that he *could* understand Dante but for some reason kept up the charade.

Vergilius got up from the desk and walked up to Dante's bed.

Dante grabbed Vergilius by his wrist and pulled him onto the bed, surprising both Ryōshū and Sinclair.

Vergilius, now sitting on the bed, sighed. “Dante…”

Dante covered their clock and let out chimes that sounded like giggles.

Ryōshū smirked. While Dante would definitely struggle with what happened to them but they had people who would support them, Ryōshū included but she wouldn't admit that openly.

There's a knock and Ryōshū goes to the door, opens it and sees Don Quixote and Meursault. She raises an eyebrow.

“Ah! Young Ryōshū! I did not expect thee to be visiting Manager Esquire!” Don Quixote said, her usual speech seemed a bit mellower now.

Ryōshū motions with her head to the two piles that Meursault and Don Quixote are holding. “W.T?” She asks.

“Don Quixote had asked me to assist her in bringing the Manager these blankets.” Meursault says. Ryōshū looks back inside the room and notices Vergilius sitting up, his back against the wall and Dante leaning against him, bundled up in blankets, only their head poking out, ticking softly. Sinclair sits at the edge of the bed and talks quietly with Dante.

“Oi. Kid.”

Sinclair immediately looks at Ryōshū who narrows her eyes at him. “D.Q.A.M.H.B.F.C.” She says. Sinclair quietly mutters under his breath. “Oh!” He immediately turns to Dante and translates what she said.

Dante ticked quietly while their head was turned to Ryōshū. Sinclair nodded. “They can come in, Don Quixote just has to be quiet.”

Ryōshū opens the door further, letting the two inside.

“Good day, Manager Esquire. How is thee feeling?” Asks Don Quixote

as Ryōshū closes the door behind her and Meursault.

<I'm okay.> Dante replied, sitting up. <I don't really need blankets, you know.>

“Ah but thee sees, the comfort of a thick fluffy blanket is always good.” Don Quixote nods as she sets the blankets on Dante's bed, Meursault doing the same, nodding.

Ryōshū thought that Dante was treated a bit too much like they were made of glass but she didn't say anything as victims of such events coped differently. And Dante didn't seem to mind. That's what mattered.

Ryōshū looked at Vergilius who had his eyes *almost* closed, he seemed tired. The situation was obviously weighing on everyone.

Over the next few days Dante slept near constantly, broken up by them waking up from a nightmare. Vergilius watched them sleep and he slept or laid next to them under Dante's very explicit consent. If Dante wanted Vergilius gone from their room he would leave. Right now he sat at the desk in their room, carefully watching Dante sleep.

Vergilius’ phone rang on the desk and he looked at who was calling. He frowned, a Limbus Company employee? Again? He put the phone on silent and went back to monitoring Dante's sleep.

Dante still felt awful but after sleeping nearly constantly they felt a bit better. They shuffled into the front of Mephistopheles. <Morning…> They yawned to the Sinners hanging there, getting a “Good morning” in reply.

Dante sat in Vergilius' seat next to the window and rested their head on said window.

A sudden knock made Dante jolt. They turned around and saw Gregor go to the front door of Mephistopheles.

“Morning?” Gregor said to the person outside. The person looked at Gregor. “Morning. Are the Executive Manager and the Red Gaze here?” The person asked. Gregor nodded. “Manager Bud’s here and I think Guide Bud is in the back?”

The person scribbled something on a stack of documents. “I need the Red Gaze for this.”

“Ho! I shall volunteer to fetch Sir Vergilius!” Don Quixote announced and soon she was gone. The person regarded everyone with a look. Dante and neither of the sinners were in their work clothes, obviously with Dante's state over the past few days.

A moment later she came back with Vergilius and Charon, who's hair was messy, she probably just woke up seeing as she yawned.

Vergilius regarded the person outside with a look but the person didn't move an inch. Dante got up from Vergilius' seat and hovered near the man.

“Right. I'm Alex, a Limbus Company employee, you don't need to know which branch.” Alex said, looking at Gregor who had his mouth open. “All you need to know is I was sent here because you haven't been answering our calls, Red Gaze” Alex used Vergilius' title of a Color thrice now, once in his presence.

“I believe I told you everything I knew when you first called.” Vergilius said, venom hidden in his voice. Alex didn't even flinch.

“Right. But unfortunately we received information of two employees of LCB killing…” Alex trailed off looking at the documents. “Employees of Heaven Office. Said employees that committed the act are Emil Sinclair and Ryōshū.”

Dante tensed. That wasn't good, not at all. They looked around and the two Sinners were not here. “The problem being?” Vergilius' patience was slowly thinning, Dante, Gregor, Don Quixote and Charon could clearly see.

“The problem being the boss of the Office reported her employees missing and a few days ago their bodies have been found.” Alex said indifferently. Vergilius’ brows furrowed. “Fucking Beatrice.” He cursed under his breath. Dante had no idea who Beatrice was but judging based on Vergilius' reaction he didn't at the very least like her.

“Basically we need the Executive Manager's side of things as well of the two mentioned employees.” Alex looked at Dante with a bored look. Dante shrank back. They didn't want to talk about it at all. They grabbed Vergilius by the sleeve and tugged lightly. The man immediately looked at them and sighed. “Just go back to your room.” Dante nodded and started to walk away.

“Actually the Executive Manager needs-” Alex started but was interrupted by Gregor. “Listen I get the company needs their information or something but Manager Bud isn't feeling well.” He nodded to Dante who stopped by the door. “Besides Ryōshū and Sinclair were the ones reported to kill those guys. You need to know things only from these two.”

Alex seemed to think for a moment then nodded. “I'll need their employee ID's too.”

Gregor saw Charon move to Dante and check up on them. “I'll keep these two company, Vergilius.” He said to the man. Dante, accompanied by Charon and Gregor, left to their room.

Vergilius sighed and turned to Don Quixote. “Go fetch Sinclair and Ryōshū.” The blonde nodded eagerly and left.

A moment later she comes back with Sinclair and Ryōshū. “Ho! I hath arrived with Young Ryōshū and Young Sinclair!” Don Quixote announces. Alex scoffs. “Delusional that one.”

“Verily, I Don Quixote, a valiant Fixer am not delusional.” She regards the Limbus Company employee with a dangerous glow of her eyes. Alex sighs. “Right, sorry.” She puts her hands up in surrender.

“Right. I need to check both of your employee ID’s and then you'll tell me what has happened.” Alex said, her eyes scanning both Sinclair and Ryōshū.

Both of them give Alex their employee ID's and wait. Ryōshū speaks up. “W.A.D.?” Sinclair shakes his head. “I think Dante doesn't need to be here now, right?” He looks to Alex who shakes her head as she hands the ID's back to Sinclair and Ryōshū.

“Ideally the Executive Manager *should* be here to recount what has happened but you two should be enough.” She said as she scribbled something. “Besides I have a vague idea what happened but it needs to be confirmed. We can start now.”

It took a few minutes at most but recounting what has happened felt like hours. Of course some details were omitted, namely what *exactly* happened to Dante.

Alex hummed. “Because the situation could be easily avoided, everyone should face a sort of punishment.” Alex glanced at Vergilius. “However because the situation *is* unique at most the LCB’s pay might

be cut a bit. I can put a request to the higher ups for a paid break." She scribbled something on a piece of paper and gave it to Vergilius. The man took it, a phone number.

"However, at most it can be a week. Because the procedure wasn't fulfilled by certain employees of my branch you were inconvenienced by phone calls." Alex looked to Vergilius. Don Quixote, Sinclair and Ryōshū were gone already. "This is my number. I'll call you to confirm the paid break in the coming days."

Vergilius frowned. "Won't it put us behind schedule?" Alex raised a brow. "Not really. There's downtime for now. However I'd advise to be careful from now on, especially the Executive Manager." She put the stack of documents in her bag. "Well I'll be off then, Red Gaze." She nodded to Vergilius and left. Vergilius closed the door to Mephistopheles and left into the corridor.

Yi Sang sits at the kitchen table with Dante, who seems to be playing a game on their phone. He was asked to keep an eye on them. They had apparently been in their room with Gregor and Charon but Dante was let out once they mentioned wanting a change of "scenery".

Yi Sang understood, after all Dante was practically cooped up in their room for the past few days. There was a part of Yi Sang that wished for the manager to have not had that experience that left them flinching and jumping other people's touch.

He did not know what had happened before and when Sinclair and Ryōshū found Dante but given the fact that the experience left them in such a state must've been horrific to them.

Yi Sang had sometimes noticed Charon near Dante's room during those few days. Knowing the driver was fond of Dante and the familial relationship she had with Vergilius it was obvious she was worried about both of them, yet she didn't hover near them, at least too much. She bothered a few of the Sinners with various activities, mainly Sinclair, as he too was affected by the situation.

Yi Sang noticed Outis hovering in the doorway and titled his head at her. She came into the kitchen and sat next to Yi Sang, opposite of Dante.

Neither speak to each other or Dante. Then Dante puts their phone down and looks at the two Sinners. <Have you seen Vergilius, Outis? > They ask the woman. She nods then speaks up. "He went to your

room. Before I entered the kitchen I hadn't seen him leave.”

Dante nods, grabs their phone and gets up. <Thanks Outis.> Outis nods back. “Of course, Executive Manager.”

Dante seems to hover for a moment, they look at the two Sinners. <I'm so-> Before they can finish speaking Yi Sang speaks up. “Dante.”

The manager looks at him. Yi Sang smiles a little. “Have a good day.” They seem to perk up a little, let out a quiet chime, a happy one, though usually it was a little louder.

They nod and say. <Thanks Yi Sang, you too.> They turn their head to Outis. <Have a good day, Outis.>

Then Dante leaves the kitchen.

Yi Sang looks at Outis. “You seem calmer.” He says. Outis’ brow furrows. “I have heard Vergilius talk with a Limbus Company employee. We probably will get a paid week off.”

Yi Sang hums, thinking of what he would do during that week off.

“Has my behavior been unreasonable recently?” Outis asks, her brow twitching. Yi Sang hums. “Are you worried about our Manager?” He asks.

“Of course! They are our Manager after all-!” Before Outis can start on her rant Yi Sang cuts her off. “Ah… I might've phrased my question wrongly.”

He stares at Outis and asks again. “Are you worried about Dante?”

Outis seems to hesitate for a moment but then nods. “Of course.”

Yi Sang thinks she'll go on a rant about Dante, praising them like she usually does but perhaps Yi Sang’s question made her think about Dante deeper than just “Executive Manager”.

“While they do not act like they used to, they seem better.” Outis finally says, no over praising Dante. Yi Sang hums. “While Dante seems to be better, they might not be. They might be putting on a mask that slips only in the privacy of their room.” He says, noticing the scowl on Outis' face.

“Ah… Don't get me wrong I do want Dante to get better but that is a

difficult process. They might never get better but we don't know as it's been only a few days.” Yi Sang says, looking away.

“Then we must make sure to support them in any way we can.” Outis says with an expression that almost looks like a smile. Yi Sang nods.

Dante opens the door to their room and walks in, closing the door behind themselves. They notice Vergilius laying on their bed, his back turned.

Dante notices Vergilius' shoulders sag just a little. They walk up to the bed and touch Vergilius’ neck with their fingers. Despite everything, having Vergilius stay with Dante near constantly feels strangely domestic.

Vergilius says nothing, just pats the space on the bed before him, quietly inviting Dante. Dante shakes their head, tick-tocks sounding like a quiet laugh.

Dante sits on the bed behind Vergilius, then they lay down and wrap their arms around him.

Vergilius lets out a sigh as if pressure has left him.

Dante looks over Vergilius’ shoulder and sees him playing a game, they've seen Charon play it a few times.

<Vergilius?>

“Hm?”

<What did that employee say?> Dante asked, they were curious. Vergilius hummed quietly, putting away his phone. He grabbed Dante's hand and gently held it. “We'll probably get a paid break, a week at most.” A pause. Vergilius left a gentle kiss on the back of Dante's hand. “She'll call me in the next few days to confirm the break.”

Dante poked Vergilius in the chest with their other hand. <That's good then?> Vergilius hummed in reply, letting go of Dante's hand. He picked up the phone and continued to play the game, Dante watching him.

After a while Dante spoke up. <Vergil?> The man hummed, letting

Dante know he was listening. <If I were to ask you to do something with me, would you agree?>

“And what would be that something?” Vergilius replied with a question. Dante hesitated for a moment.

<If I wanted to be marked by you and asked, would you do it?> Dante asked, unsure if they should let the man know of that. They noticed Vergilius stop playing the game and a red glow, coming from the man's eyes.

<F-Forget it. Forget I said anything.> Dante said, hiding their head in Vergilius' shoulder, they wrap their arms around Vergilius tighter.

“Dante” The way Vergilius said their name made them shiver. “If you asked I would. Is it because you want that or because of what happened to you?”

Dante nearly didn't hear Vergilius' question. They didn't raise their head. <Does it matter?> They feel Vergilius shift in their grasp and gently, slowly his arms wrap around them. “It depends. Do you want me to mark you because you want that?” He asked as he left a kiss on their prosthetic.

Dante hesitates for a moment, they look up at Vergilius and his eyes are closed. They reach out with their hand and cup Vergilius' cheek, the man immediately leaning into the touch. He looked sad, like any moment he would cry. Maybe Dante should've said nothing about that. Well what's done is done.

<Yes I do want that.> They say as they brush their thumb across Vergilius’ cheek. <I do want it to be with you, my Vergil.>

Dante stood outside Mephistopheles waiting for the Sinners to come out, which with their usual behavior during breaks was difficult. It was as if a group of 12 adults became kids when it wasn't work.

In the meantime Dante put on Vergilius' jacket, the man had given it to them, hoping it would make them feel safer outside. They wanted Vergilius to tag along but the man had paperwork to do and Charon was watching Mephistopheles.

“How are you feeling, Manager Bud?” Gregor asks, standing next to Dante.

They nod, pulling Vergilius' jacket closer. <I'm okay.> They look at the window closest to the door and see Faust and Vergilius talking about something. <I'll say if I want to go back, like we all agreed.>

Gregor nods, his eyes trailed off to Dante's neck. "Sooo…. Had fun during the night?" He asks.

<H-Huh..?> Dante looks at Gregor. The man points at his neck with a little smile. Dante's hand flew to their neck as if it would hide many more marks Vergilius had made, their fire going up and roaring.

"Woah~ What did you say to make them react like this, Greg?" Rodion asked, leaning on Gregor. The woman's eyes trailed off from Dante's clock to their neck. She grinned. "Fuhuhu~ I think Dante had a great night, right?" She teased.

<Rodya…>

The woman kept the grin on her face.

Really the only reason that Dante and the Sinners were going out is because today was the first day of the paid break. Dante wanted to try spending the day outside.

The agreed time was six hours. Three with one group of the Sinners, three with the other, unless of course Dante wanted to go back earlier.

The agreed two groups consisted of: Rodion, Hong Lu, Meursault, Don Quixote, Heathcliff and Gregor for the first three hours and Ryōshū, Sinclair, Outis, Ishmael, Faust and Yi Sang for the remaining three.

Hong Lu looked over the items in the shop. The quality and craftsmanship wasn't what he was used to, the stuff here wasn't specifically commissioned.

He looked to Dante and Rodion who were looking at something. "How about this, Dante?" Asked Rodion, holding a piece of jewelry. Hong Lu knew who Dante wanted to give a gift to.

<I don't know, Rodya… Something isn't quite right about this one.> Dante said, their head tilted. Hong Lu glanced at the store clerk who had a peculiar expression. He must've never seen such a beautiful prosthetic then.

“You two understand it?” The clerk asked Hong Lu. The man with heterochromia hummed. “Yes we do understand *them* .” He walked to Rodion and Dante. “I don't think we'll find what we're looking for here, Dante.”

<O-Oh… Yeah.> Dante did a quick look around the store. Hong Lu hums. “Besides I think we should look for something red, no?” He tilted his head.

Rodion lit up. “Yeah. Honestly this trip is so fun I kinda forgot.” The woman laughed. She put the piece of jewelry down at the counter. “Let's go check another store, Dante.”

Rodion and Dante were the first to leave the store, Hong Lu hovered for a moment. He looked at the store clerk, his usual calm face replaced by a frown.

He watched the clerk shrink back and then he left the store joining the others, smile back on his face.

Vergilius stepped off Mephistopheles to get fresh air. He looked at his watch, thirty minutes until Dante and the Sinners were supposed to be back.

He wouldn't admit it to anyone, maybe besides Charon and Dante but he was a little worried the outing. He wanted the duration of it to be less than six hours but Dante managed to convince him.

He heard footsteps and Charon hopped off Mephistopheles. “Verg is worried?” She asked. He nodded, looking ahead. “It's okay, Charon is worried too.” She grabbed Vergilius' hand and lightly squeezed.

Vergilius noticed the all familiar faces but without Dante. He knew the manager would be going back with the other group so he wasn't *too* worried.

“Oh? Dante's not back yet with the rest?” Asked Rodion. She looked to Vergilius with a certain look. He narrowed his eyes at her.

Rodion walked into the bus grinning from ear to ear, the rest of the group behind her. All of them seemed to have varying levels of smiles.

Vergilius sighed.

He noticed the other group *with* Dante, however there seemed to be something unusual.

Outis was giving Dante a piggyback ride. Vergilius narrowed his eyes at that. Soon enough the group was next to Mephistopheles.

“Did Tick-Tock have fun?” Charon asks. Outis lets go of Dante and boards the bus. Dante nods energetically. Charon smiles, lets go of Vergilius' hand and boards the bus.

The rest of the Sinners board the bus, the only ones left are Dante and Vergilius.

Dante digs into the pockets of Vergilius' coat and pulls out a small box, handing it to Vergilius nearly immediately.

He looks at the box then at Dante who's looking down. He smiles a little as he opens the box.

<I know it's not much and I don't even know if you're gonna like it-> Dante starts rambling. Vergilius sighs. “You know I can't understand you Dante.” Even after all this time he still pretends, mostly so the Sinners “have to” play translator which amuses him.

Dante looks up, their fire crackling a little louder than usual. Vergilius looks into the box and inside is a singular silver earring with a dangling red gem. He pulls it out and looks at it closer. “Hm.”

He gives Dante the box, takes off his earring and puts on the new one.

Dante lets out a cash register sound and their fire roars higher. Vergilius tilts his head with a little smile.

<Do you like it?> Dante asks. Vergilius narrows his eyes, still smiling. “Let's go inside, Dante.”

Dante nods and grabs Vergilius' hand and the two board Mephistopheles.

End Notes

Translation of Ryōshū's acronyms:
I.D.W.T.P.C.V. - I'll deal with those pigs, call Vergilius
T.H.T.C.H. - Tell him to come here
Y.D.G.K. - You did good kid
G.T.T.V. - Give them to Vergilius
D.Q.A.M.H.B.F.C. - Don Quixote and Meursault have blankets for Clockhead

Uhhh... Poor Yi Sang almost didn't make it into the fic, I kinda forgot bout him. Outis is a hag & idk what I did with her
Might make a follow up when the LCB Regular Check-up releases & I see what's going on there

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!